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SUBJECT: UN FOURTH COMMITTEE DEBATE ON ISRAELI PRACTICES IN
THE WEST BANK, GAZA, AND GOLAN.

11. Summary: The UN General Assembly's Fourth Committee met November 4 - 6 to debate the annual "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories" (the Special Committee). The debate included statements from 29 states (mainly Arab and Muslim) and the Palestinian Observer Mission. Most condemned Israel's "occupation," separation barrier and settlements construction, "collective punishment" against Palestinians, targeted killings, and obstruction of the free movement of Palestinians. Israel deemed the report biased and stated that such rhetoric would not improve the Palestinian situation. The Israeli delegate questioned Sudan, Syria, Iran, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) ability to speak on democracy and human rights, which they refuted in rights of reply. Some states, such as Algeria, accused Israel of undermining the Annapolis process, while others, such as France on behalf of the EU, encouraged the parties to bolster negotiations. End Summary.

Report of the Special Committee

12. Chairperson of the Special Committee, H.M.G.S. Palihakkara of Sri Lanka, said that despite the continuation of the Annapolis process, the human rights situation in Gaza and the West Bank had deteriorated. As with past reports, the Chairperson condemned Israeli military incursions, continued restrictions on goods and people, and construction of the separation barrier and expansion of settlements. The report alleged that Israel once again denied the Committee access to "the occupied territories."

General Debate

13. Palestinian Observer Mission: The Palestinian representative accused Israel of conducting extrajudicial killings, violent military attacks, and destruction of homes.

In Gaza, the representative said that 80 percent of the population relies on food aid; over 90 percent of industry, business, and workshops are closed; and 50 percent of the workforce is unemployed. In the West Bank, she said that Israel continues imposing restrictions on movement, noting the "permit regime" and military checkpoints. On the peace process, the representative stated that while they were engaged with "the Israeli side," the aforementioned violations continue.

14. Israel: The Israeli delegate stated that 2007 had witnessed the most substantial negotiations since 2000. However, the delegate lamented the biased nature of the report, stating that it did not take into account the well-being of Israeli citizens, among other issues. He also

stated that such rhetoric would have no bearing on the Palestinian situation. He highlighted that Israel does not seek to hide its human rights record, but rather welcomes the U.S. Department of State, the EU, UN bodies, and NGOs to examine its record. The delegate said that it was absurd that "bastions of democracy, including Sudan, North Korea, Iran, and Syria, lecture the open and free state of Israel."

¶15. Syria and Iran: The Syrian delegate accused Israel of deliberately and methodically altering the Golan and called its "occupation" "a crime against humanity." He added that Israel refused to de-mine territory, stating that its mines had killed over 200 people. The Iranian delegate accused Israel of several alleged crimes, including collective punishment, executions, and torture. He urged organizations and the media to publicize the situation in the West Bank and Gaza. Both delegations also responded to Israel's statement during their right of reply.

¶16. DPRK: The North Korean delegate accused Israel of committing human rights atrocities, stating that thousands of Palestinians were "groaning" in Israeli prisons. He argued that measures to end the "Middle East conflict" had been compromised by "certain countries" that tolerate Israel's "occupation" and human rights violations, and supported Israel politically, militarily, and economically.

Comments on the Annapolis Process

¶17. France on behalf of the EU and Uganda: The French delegate welcomed the Israeli and Palestinian parties' efforts to continue negotiations and encouraged them to "take bold steps" within the Annapolis process. The Ugandan

USUN NEW Y 00001074 002 OF 002

delegate reiterated support for resuming direct negotiations and called for the Quartet (i.e., U.S., EU, Russia, UN) to renew efforts to bolster the peace process.

¶18. Algeria, Pakistan, and Sudan: The Algerian delegate said that while the Annapolis Conference had tried to renew the peace process, Israel's "genocidal policy" continues. The delegate accused "certain Security Council members" of encouraging Israel's "attitude." The Pakistani delegate stated that the Annapolis Conference required immediate confidence-building measures and criticized Israel for undermining the process. The Sudanese delegate called on Israel to uphold its commitment, consistent with the Annapolis Conference and the Road Map, to creating a Palestinian state.
Khalilzad